FREEDOM

The firſt of Bleſſings.

——————With native Freedom brave,
The meaneſt *Briton* ſcorns the higheſt Slave. *Addiſon.*

THERE never was an Affair that related to the Public, which while it was depending, has been more univerſally the Subject of Cenſure, than the Bill for an Exciſe upon every Man thro' the Province. As it is now publiſhed for every one's Conſideration, it may, it ought to be treated with the utmoſt Freedom, and to have no more Mercy ſhown it, than *that* ſhows to the Liberties of the People. It was judg'd to be, and ſo it will appear, the moſt pernicious Attack upon *Engliſh Liberty* that ever was attempted; and tho' it was gloſs'd over with the ſpecious Pretence of making the Rich pay for their Liquors, as well as the Poor, which no Body I know of is averſe to, yet it is certain this ought to be done by other Methods than enſlaving the whole Country. The particular Advantages of diſtinct Communities were forgot upon this Occaſion, and Liberty, Heaven-born Liberty, the Source of Vertue, the Nurſe of Induſtry, Wealth and Contentment, the Concern not of a few, but of every Individual, was the ſole Motive to the Oppoſition. The Minds of People were mov'd with a generous Diſdain to ſee the moſt valuable Intereſt they had in the World trifled away, the noble Ardour ſpread thro' all Ranks and Degrees of Men, and affected every one, except a Number of thoſe who ought to have been the firſt that felt it: A Number of thoſe, I ſay, for ſome few, like *Milton's Abdiel*, were faithful found, whoſe Names ſtand upon Record, and of whoſe Merits and Services their grateful Country will never be unmindful. As for the Promoters of it, who will have

the Honour likewiſe of being known, tho' all of them can't be ſuppos'd to have particular Views of Advantage to themſelves, nor were all of them *Exciſe Officers* before, yet their ſeveral Towns, 'tis hop'd, will make them underſtand, that ſuch an Inſenſibility with regard to the Rights of Mankind, ſuch a Numbneſs of feeling in this reſpect, is attended with as bad Conſequences, as any wicked Deſigns whatever.

When the famous *Tobacco Bill*, known commonly by the Name of the *Exciſe Bill* was brought into Parliament in the Year 1733, the moſt vigorous Oppoſition was made to it from all Quarters of the Nation. The grand Inquiry was, not how it affected the Town, or how it affected the Country, but how it affected the whole Iſland of *Britain*. And tho' it was puſh'd on at firſt with all the Force of miniſterial Influence, the Miniſter himſelf, after a firſt reading, choſe to give it up, rather than increaſe the Ferment of the People. The Rejoycing upon its Fall was univerſal. The City of *London*, as it was firſt in the Oppoſition to it, ſo firſt began the Triumph at its Overthrow. The firſt Night, and for two Days after, Demonſtrations of Joy were to be ſeen every where; the City throughout was illuminated with Candles and Bonfires, and the Rings of Bells were kept continually playing, the Populace crying out *No Exciſe, no wooden Shoes*. The ſame publick Rejoycings were made almoſt in every City and Borough in *England*. In ſhort, the Rejoycings were like thoſe upon a Victory: And not without Reaſon, for Conqueſts abroad are much leſs valuable than the Poſſeſſion of Liberty at home. And as in ancient Triumphs the Emblems of conquer'd Cities, and Figures of Men adorn'd with captive Arms attended the Victor's Chariot; ſo upon the above-mentioned Occaſion, odd Figures dreſs'd up with Ribbons, with Pipes in their Mouths and Bottles in their Hands, were carried about in great Pomp, and at laſt thrown into the Flames. In particular at *Rygate*, the Image of a *fat clumſy Fellow* was carried about the Town, with diſtinguiſhing Marks upon its Habit, and after various Indignities offer'd, it was thrown into a large Bonfire. Such were the Circumſtances that attended the famous *Exciſe Bill* in *England*: Such the Rejoycings upon its Deſtruction. And yet this Bill was but a Bawble in Compariſon of that now in Queſtion among us. It immediately affected only the Dealers in *Tobacco*, and none elſe were ſubject to any Enquiry. Every Man beſides might ſmoke his Pipe and drink his Glaſs under

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his own Roof, and no Officer could come in to call him to Account for it. Here was no Oath to be taken by private Persons: No Family Transactions to be sworn to, nor Fine for those who refus'd to wear such a Badge of Slavery. But what can we think would have been the Consequence, had every honest Housekeeper in the Kingdom found an Officer set over him, who could oblige him to declare upon Oath, or get him smartly fin'd if he would not declare how many Pipes had been smok'd, and how many *Quids* had been chew'd in his Family. In all Probability the Scene of *Wat Tyler* would have been reviv'd, and the People have rais'd as great a Tumult, at a Scoundrel Excisеman's meddling with their *Tobacco-Pouch*, as they formerly did at one of that Kind's thrusting his Hands under a poor Girl's Petticoats.

And now I have mentioned *Petticoats*, I can't help observing, that the good Women of *New England* would do well to take Care of *theirs*; for by the Bill I find Mr. *Excisеman* is to have the Examination of them too, according to the Words *him* and *her*, and if they refuse to swear, he may possibly insist upon *personal Security* for the *Ten Pounds*, Lawful Money. For I can tell them, Honour is not likely to be the distinguishing Characteristick of a Fellow that will take upon him such an invidious Office. I hope the Tea-Tables and other *Female Associations* will take this Affair into their serious Consideration, and use their Influence, as the *Roman* Matrons did formerly, to save the State. Some modern *Marcii* may be found, who tho' deaf to the Voice of Reason, will relent at Female Intreaties, and not insist upon the Ruin of their Country. It is no Joke, I can assure them; the Bill shall speak for itself. "*Be it further enacted*, That every Person of whom the Collector—— or his "Deputy shall in Manner aforesaid, demand an Account of the "Wines, Rum, or other distilled Spirits by *him* or *her* consum'd—— "and who shall either declare that *he* or *she* hath not consum'd any "Wine—— except what *he* or *she* hath purchas'd—— shall, if requir'd "—— declare the same on Oath, *&c.*

Tremble, then, ye Fair, such of you I mean, who retire often to your Closets, not altogether for Devotion. The Oath will pursue you into your most secret Apartments, and bring to Light what was done there. *Citronia* must bid adieu to her Bottle or her Fame: And

And *Marrettella*'s Confeſſor will find out that the pretty little Stammer in her Speech, is not always owing to Affectation.

The *Ammonites*, we are told, in ancient Days, took it into their Heads to bring certain Meſſengers ſent to them from *Judæa*, under the *Laws of Exciſe*: And this they preambled too, no doubt, to be *for the greater Benefit and Advantage of the Public*; for in ſhort, they took the Gentlemen to come upon an *illicit Trade*, by which the Government *would be loſers*. Accordingly, inſtead of fining them *Ten Pounds, lawful Money*, they took them and ſhav'd off one half of their Beards, and cut off their Garments in the middle. Both King and People highly reſented this *Ammonitiſh* Trick, the People were aſham'd to be treated ſo, and the King thought it an Indignity which ought not to be offer'd his Subjects. Some Folks may think there was not much in the Thing; Tailors and Barbers exiſted, we may ſuppoſe, in thoſe Days as well as the preſent, who could ſoon have mended the Matter, the Tailors by furniſhing them with new Skirts, or new Coats, and the Barbers by ſupplying them with ſupplemental Beards, as eaſily as your modern ones do the Ladies with their fine curl'd Locks. But the Caſe, was this, every one of the Sons of *Jacob had a Right* to wear a long Beard, and a Garment below his Knees, and no Body had a Right to make him look like a Fool, by taking away half of either of them. The *Ammonites*, we may well imagine, laugh'd when they ſaw the odd Figure the poor Men made; for your miſchievous Folks are apt to laugh and ſneer when they think they have got their Wills; and their Brethren the *Iſraelites* would have laugh'd too, for it does not ſignify, a droll Figure will excite Laughter even in thoſe who ſincerely pity the unfortunate Object, had not *David* the Ruler, the Man after God's own Heart, by adviſing them not to be in a hurry to ſhow themſelves, given them an Opportunity of bringing all to right, and ſo wiping off the Reproach from *Iſrael*. And ſhall not we make as ridiculous a Figure in the Eyes of our Neighbours, with our Liberty curtail'd in the Manner which is threatned, as *David*'s Meſſengers did with their *excis'd Beards* and *circumcis'd Skirts*? For it ſeems to me a grave Councellor of the *Maſſachuſetts*, holding up his venerable Hand, before an imperious Deputy *Exciſeman*, and ſolemnly declaring upon Oath, whether he laid in his Wine by the Pipe, or bought it by ſin-

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gle Jugg from *Hamock*, is as whimſical a Sight, as an old *Iſraelite* with naked Buttocks and half a Beard.

But to return to ourſelves. We reverence *England* as our *Mother Country*. The People of *Britain* value themſelves on the Poſſeſſion of their Liberties the moſt of any under Heaven: Of theſe Liberties what regards *the internal State of their Families* is one of the moſt ſacred. Nothing is more becoming in Children, than to imitate the Virtues of their Parents, and nothing will prove our Deſcent better than an inviolable Attachment to thoſe Privileges, which an *Engliſhman* would ſooner die than part with.

But our Anceſtors were not only free born *Engliſhmen*; they were Men of Religion too; Men that *trembled at an Oath*, and thought the Name *of the Great God of Heaven* was not to be mentioned but in the moſt *ſerious Manner*, and upon the *moſt ſolemn Occaſions*. It is really ſurpriſing, that ſome ſuch Conſideration alone did not ſtop the Progreſs of the Bill: That the Advocates for it did not ſee the unbounded Licence given a Deputy *Exciſeman*, tended immediately to leſſen the Reverence of an Oath. And when an Oath is treated with Diſregard, and us'd in a ſlighty careleſs Manner, what Bond of Society is left? What Tie ſufficient to connect Men together? All Sorts of People by the Bill are oblig'd to take the Oath, and to have it adminiſtred by a Perſon that may be quite unfit for ſuch a Solemnity, a *Deputy*, who we may depend upon it, will be of the loweſt Rank, and whoſe Character alone will be enough to render all he does contemptible. But as my Deſign was to conſider this Bill only with regard to civil Liberty, I ſhall enlarge no further upon this Topick, but hope that thoſe whoſe Buſineſs it is to teach the People, that the *Fear of God is the beginning of Wiſdom*, will take this Opportunity, for it *will be a Word in Seaſon*, to eſtabliſh well this Foundation of all Religion. It is a Matter of infinite Moment: The Morals of the People depend intirely upon it; Truth, Juſtice, Goodwill, mutual Truſt and Confidence, and every ſocial Bleſſing.

Happy it is for us, that we have a Gentleman at the Head of Government, who knows much better, and feels more ſenſibly what touches the People's Liberty, than moſt of thoſe who are choſe on

Purpoſe to be its Guardians. Who to a conſtant and ſteady Zeal for our Welfare, has lately added a moſt engaging Inſtance of his Integrity, and whoſe Tenderneſs for our moſt important Intereſts, muſt needs raiſe in every vertuous Mind, a Monument of Gratitude of more Value than a hundred Statues.

In Conſequence of the Bill's being publiſhed, every Man now, thank the Governor for it, will have an Opportunity to ſee with his own Eyes, how near he has been to Slavery, and to judge for himſelf, whether he will conſent to wear a Yoke for the future: Whether he will conſent that the Man for whom he gave his Vote in order to maintain his Liberty, ſhall give *his* to an Act which puts every Freeman in the Province, upon the ſame Footing with a Tavern-keeper: Whether he will conſent to have a Maſter ſet over him, to whom he muſt tell, and ſwear to it too, if his Maſter bids him, how much ſpirituous Liquor has been drank in his Family.

Many Artifices, no doubt, will be made uſe of to ſoften this Affair, and the People among other Things will be told, that the great Clamour rais'd againſt the Bill is only a *Scarecrow*, that the mighty *Hydra* that threatens to devour their Liberties, is nothing but an Officer who is to wait upon every Man once a Year, and in a *civil genteel Manner*, *aſk him to be ſo good* as to tell him, what Wine or ſpirituous Liquor he has had Occaſion for. As for the Oath, the Officer is not *oblig'd* to tender it to any one, but is only *empowered* to give it to all whom he ſuſpects. But two or three plain honeſt Queſtions, will ſet this Matter in a true Light.

This *civil* and *genteel* Officer, may he not if he pleaſes, be *very uncivil* and *very rude?* And are Men in theſe Offices uſually remarkable for *Civility* and *good Manners* to thoſe under their Power? Has not Power a natural Tendency to make a Man inſolent, eſpecially when committed to Creatures of ſuch a Stamp, as the lower Officers uſually are? May he not if he pleaſes, ſuſpect every Man in the Province? If he is not oblig'd to put every one to his Oath, has he not Power to do it? If I refuſe to take the Oath, muſt not I pay *Ten Pounds*, lawful Money? Is any private Man in any other Part of the *Britiſh* Dominions expos'd to ſuch an Inſult? Nay, is any Subject in the Dominions of the grand Monarque? Will not this

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ſame Officer have an Opportunity to gratify his Malice againſt any particular Perſons? Will he not find a Way to work out ſome private Intereſt of his own, which at preſent cannot be thought of, to the Injury of others? Can a Countryman, who employs his Neighbour that comes to Market in Town, to purchaſe his Wine, or Spirits for him, as is frequently the Caſe, ſwear with a ſafe Conſcience, that they were purchaſed of thoſe who had paid the Exciſe? And is he not expos'd to be harraſs'd if he refuſes? May not ſome new Emergency require with equal Reaſon, that I ſhould give an Account of every Thing elſe I have in my Houſe, and even how many Shirts I have to my Back? And may there not happen ſome future Change in our Conſtitution, when what is done now will be made an Argument for ſome new ſlaviſh Device hereafter?

Pious Divines tell us, that ſeldom a Man commences a compleat Sinner at once; he uſually begins with one Sin, and that ſmooths the Way to another. It fares ſo with Liberty. Moſt of the Nations now in Slavery, fell into it by Degrees. One Point given up, made Way for a new Demand, and one Encroachment ſucceeded another, till at laſt nothing remain'd to give or take, all was loſt, and Liberty, 'tis to be fear'd, once loſt, is loſt forever.

Sold at the *Heart* and *Crown* in Cornhill, *Boſton.*